We claim :

1.   A backup and retrieval system operating on a first and second computing unit, the

backup and retrieval system comprising:

a first software agent that runs on the first computing unit;

a second software agent that runs on the second computing unit, the second

software agent communicatively coupled to the first software agent;

at least one storage device communicatively coupled to the second software

agent,

the second software agent controlling physical backup of data onto the at least one

storage device; and

the first software agent controlling the second software agent.

2.   The backup and retrieval system of claim 1 further comprising a third software

agent that controls backups of a computing unit.

3.   The backup and retrieval system of claim 2 wherein the third software agent runs

on either the first computing device or the second computing device.

4.   The backup and retrieval system of claim 2 further comprising a third computing

device, wherein the third software agent runs on the third computing device.

5.   The backup and retrieval system of claim 1 further comprising a plurality of computing devices communicatively coupled to the first software agent, wherein the first software agent controls backup functions for the plurality of computing devices.

6.   A backup and retrieval system operating on a first network device and a second network device, the backup and retrieval system comprising:

a management software component that operates on the first network device;

a media software component, communicatively coupled to the management software component, that operates on the second network device;

a storage device communicatively coupled to the media software component;

the media software component controls backup data to the storage device; and

the management software component controls the media software component.

7.   The backup and retrieval system of claim 6 further comprising a client software component, communicatively coupled to the management software component and the media software component, that controls backups of a particular network device.

8.   The backup and retrieval system of claim 7 wherein the client software component operates on the first network device.

9.   The backup and retrieval system of claim 7 wherein the client software component operates on the second network device.

10.   The backup and retrieval system of claim 7 further comprising a third network device, wherein the client software component operates on the third network device.

11.   A backup and retrieval system operating across a network containing a plurality of network devices, the backup and retrieval system comprising:

a management software component that operates on a first network device of the plurality of network devices;

a media software component communicatively coupled to the management software component;

a storage device, communicatively coupled to the media software component, the media software component controlling backups to the storage device; and

wherein the management software component controls the media component software.

12.   The backup and retrieval system of claim 11 further comprising a client software component that controls backups of one of the plurality of network devices.

13.   The backup and retrieval system of claim 12 wherein any two of the client software component, the media software component, or the manager software component operate on one of the plurality of network devices.

14.   The backup and retrieval system of claim 11 wherein the management software component controls backup functions for the plurality of network devices.

15. The backup and retrieval system of claim 11 wherein the media software component creates an index of information on the location of archived information on the storage device, and communicates at least part of the index of information to the management software component.

16. A backup and retrieval system for a network, the network comprising a plurality of computing devices, the plurality of computing devices comprising a first computing device and a second computing device, the backup and retrieval system comprising:

a management software component running on the first computing device;

a media software component communicatively coupled to the management software component;

at least one backup device communicatively coupled to the media software component;

a client software component communicatively coupled to the management software component and the media software component;

wherein the media component software controls the at least one backup device;

the management component software controls the media component software;

the client component software controls backups of any particular computing device; and

at least one of either the media software component or the client software component runs on the second computing device.

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17.   The backup and retrieval system of claim 16 wherein the management component software controls backups of the plurality of computing devices.

18.   The backup and retrieval system of claim 16 wherein the media component software creates an index of information on the location of archived information on the at least one backup device, and communicates at least part of the index of information to the management component software.

19.   The backup and retrieval system of claim 16 wherein the management component software and the media component software operate on different computing devices.

20.   The backup and retrieval system of claim 16 wherein the management component software and the media component software operate on the same computing device.

21.   The backup and retrieval system of claim 16 wherein the backup device comprises a plurality of different media.